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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the problem of sexual violence on college and university campuses by presenting an innovative strategy designed to respond to the problem. It describes a consortium of colleges organized around a community rape crisis service and explains how representatives of colleges and universities in the New Haven, Connecticut area have joined together in an effort to respond more effectively and efficiently to campus needs for both better ways to increase awareness about sexual assault and quality initial intervention to assault victims. Specific objectives of the consortium are listed: (1) to improve the quality and frequency of sexual assault programming by standardizing rape prevention information and sharing that information among college professionals; (2) to improve access to post-rape intervention by establishing on-site satellite services of New Haven Rape Crisis Services on campuses of consortium members; and (3) to consult with other universities in order to assist them in developing both programming and on-site satellite response services. Methods used by the consortium to achieve these objectives are described and problem areas associated with the consortium model are identified. Attitudinal problems, organizational problems, and problems related to the student climate of involvement on an individual campus are discussed. Potential benefits of the consortium approach are presented. (Author/NB)

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The New Haven College Consortium on Sexual Assault: A Collaborative Model

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ABSTRACT

In the face of the enormity of the problem of sexual violence on campuses, colleges and universities have responded in a variety of ways. This paper describes one innovative strategy: a consortium of colleges organized around a community rape crisis service. Representatives of colleges and universities in the New Haven (Connecticut) area have joined together in an effort to respond more effectively and efficiently to campus needs for both better ways to increase awareness about sexual assault and quality initial intervention to asault victime.

The New Haven College Consortium on Sexual Assault:

A Collaborative Model

For at least a decade it has been generally known that college and university students are a high-risk group for sexual assault. Initially it was believed that assault by strangers was the predominate form of sexual violence on college campuses, possibly the result of the persistent myth of a mysterious stranger breaching the security of the campus to attack innocent students. Recent studies have established the fact that "stranger rape" occurs far less frequently than does "acquaintance rape" (Roark, 1987). National Crime Survey statistics indicate that 52% of the completed sexual assaults reported for 1982 involved perpetrators known to the survivors (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1984). That percentage may be higher on college campuses (Roark, 1987; Koss, Dinero, Seibel & Cox, 1988), since assaults between students generally are not reported; in fact some of those attacked do not consider these experiences crimes (Koss et al, 1988). From 15 to 20% of college women report having been raped; an additional 20 to 25% report attempted rapes (Koss & Oros, 1982; Meyer, 1984, December 5).

The major national study done by Koss for Ms magazine (Sweet, 1985 October) is often cited because it documents the enormity of the problem. Among college women, 53.7% reported having experienced some form of sexual victimization within the year prior to the survey. Fifteen percent reported experiences

defined under Ohio statutes as rape, but 75% of the women did not identify their experiences as rape. One-third did not discuss the incident with anyone; more than 90% did not report the incidents to the police.

Another measure of the extent of the problem is the psychological symptoms experienced by assault survivors. Rape-induced aftereffects include depression and anxiety, as well as lessened satisfaction in sex and in relationships (Koss et al, 1988). A recent study at Duke reported that student victims of a single incidence of rape by an intimate were as psychologically stressed by their experience as were victims of repeated asaults in childhood (Bales, 1988, June).

In the face of the enormity of the problem of sexual violence on campuses, colleges and universities have responded in a variety of ways. In addition to providing psychological services for assault victims, many colleges are developing educational programs for the general student population. Such programs are designed to increase awareness of the problem, build skills in rape prevention strategies, in assertiveness, in managing conflict, anger, and sexual tension, and increase self-esteem. In addition to skills-building, such workshops encourage exploration of both values and attitudes about sexual rerlations, violence, and power (Roark, 1987). Some campuses have devloped model programs, such as Campus Organized Against Rape (COAR) at the University of Florida.

Many campus-based programs are autonomous, drawing on the human resources of the campus and commercially-developed films or booklets. Examples of such documented programs exist at three universities in Kansas (Torrey & Lee, 1987). Each college developed its programming separately, drawing on campus-wide constituencies.

While such autonomous programming may prove to be effective, Roark (1987) suggests another approach:

> The prevention of violence must be multifaceted, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the underpinnings of violence. Prevention, even more than treatment, requires broad interdisciplinary and interprofessional planning. Prevention is built on an understanding of the issues involved and on an understanding of the population at risk. Hence, knowledge about college student development, the campus environment, the collegiate experience, and specific forms of abuse such as rape, sexual harassment, and assaultive behaviors is a prerequisite for designing prevention strategies (p. 368).

It is in the spirit of Roark's multi-facted and interprofessional approach to prevention that the College Consortium on Sexual Assault was organized in the greater New Haven (CT) area.

The Consortium

In 1986 the Director of the Greater New Haven YWCA Rape Crisis Services developed the consortium model to respond to the

increasing frequency of sexual assaults on New Haven area campuses. The idea behind the consortium was to bring college students and higher education professionals together in order to address concerns around this issue. The major goal of the consortium model is to coordinate and expand both educational programming and post-assault interventions. It would then be possible to reach out more effectively to students and help reduce the incidence of sexual assaults among college students.

Students and faculty from several colleges, both public and private, in the greater New Haven area were invited to join the consortium. Concurrently, a peer counseling service was created at Yale University, staffed by students trained and certified by New Haven Rape Crisis Services as rape crisis counselors, according to guidelines established by Connecticut law. Such on-site or satellite services provide well-trained student responders to campus sexual assault victims, under the supervision and administrative support of New Haven Rape Crisis Services.

Objectives

From its inception, the consortium has had specific objectives to achieve. The first is to improve the quality and frequency of sexual assault programming by standardizing rape prevention information and sharing that information among college professionals. The second objective is to improve access to post-rape intervention by establishing on-site satellite services of New Haven Rape Crisis Services on campuses of consortium

members. A third objective is to consult with other universities in order to assist them in developing both programming and on-site satellite response services.

Methods

Currently representatives from nine campuses in the greater New Haven area have joined the consortium. Each campus is asked to send two representatives, ideally a student and either a faculty member or administrative representative. The consortium representatives act as liaison between the consortium and the campus sexual assault programming and response network.

The consortium seeks to develop a cooperative group on each campus, a model similar to programs like COAR. All communities within the college are represented on the cooperative group: students, faculty, administrators, police, health services, residential and other counselors, and clerical and maintenance employees. Depending on existing university policy, the cooperative group may be able to set policy and establish protocols for dealing with sexual assault complaints.

Student volunteers play significant roles in the consortium model. A group of student volunteers serve as community educators on sexual assault on each campus. These volunteers undergo special training, committing themselves to a specific number of hours monthly to develop community outreach programs and related services. They help to plan orientation programs and lead workshops on the subjects described earlier in this paper.

A sub-set of student volunteers undergo training and certification as rape crisis counselors, in order to staff satellite services. Such students may be recruited from clinical majors (social work, nursing, counseling), but this is not required. They undergo thirty-two hours of rape crisis training from New Haven Rape Crisis Services and must successfully complete a written exam for certification as Connecticut rape crisis counselors. Certification is maintained by completing twelve hours of work monthly, as documented by New Haven Rape Crisis Services.

Joint programming has taken a number of forms. One year several campuses planned a week of rape prevention programs within several weeks of each other. Another year each campus took responsibility for one workshop, using consortium-developed informational brochures.

Problem Areas

A consortium approach to sexual assault on college campuses is not devoid of problems, but the potential applications of the strategy far outweigh any practical problems that have to be addressed.

Most of the problems associated with the consortium model are not unique to this approach; problems that emerge are fairly typical campus responses to any social or health risk to a group of students on campus.

The first problem is attitudinal. Sexual assault has to be

perceived as a campus community issue worthy of response, not only by the women's community on campus but, more importantly, by significant leaders on campus, either in student affairs or in the faculty. On some campuses, sexual assault is thought of as a personal problem of the victim; on other campuses, sexual assault is perceived as a failure of campus security. In either case, sexual assault is considered an aberration, rather than the manifestation of pervasive attitudes toward women, power, and violence. Only when a critical mass of significant campus leaders and managers recognize the ubiquitous nature of sexual assault on college campuses can educational programming and response services be developed effectively.

A second problem is organizational. Using a consortium approach does not completely absolve the college from its responsibility to address the issue of sexual assault on its own campus. The college can contract with the local consortium to provide programming and response services in a college satellite service, but the liaison responsibility must be assigned to one or two campus representatives to insure communication and cooperation between the two organizations and continuity of the program.

A third problem relates to the student climate of involvement on an individual campus. The consortium model can be effective not only as a campus-sponsored service to students but also as a student learning experience in volunteerism. If the

college recruits students who are politically aware of the issue of sexual assault and the campus climate supports students' acting upon their beliefs, then the students will be confident in participating in a consortium, even without prior administrative participation in the consortium. In this first case, the students can lead the way. But the more likely experience of involvement in the consortium is the professional leading the way. A member of the counseling center, health services, or residential hall staff is assigned the responsibility of participating in the consortium, then has to recruit students who may need to learn not only what the issue of sexual assault is but also how to volunteer their efforts amidst a campus climate not supportive of stuudent political or social action.

Potential Benefits

Despite the practical problems attendant on participating in a consortium dealing with sexual assault, the consortium model is effective in dealing with a major social issue. It also brings valuable networking and collaborating benefits to both the campuses and to individual students and professional participants, and it develops more comprehensive programming for the campus community.

Sexual assault, particularly in the form of acquaintance rape, is an enormous problem that is best addressed by concerted action of a number of campuses and community agencies working together. The consortium model presents an effective and

efficient way of organizing educational programming and providing initial response services. In the case of acquaintance rape which frequently pits student against student, the consortium provides an objective forum slightly removed from the local campus tension. The wide publicity about acquaintance rape is both a trigger and an incentive for the individual college to move outside of itself to a consortium with other colleges.

Participating in the consortium can break down campus insularity and enhance the credibility of any action taken. No college feels more alone than the campus that is victimized by sexual assault. Like the victim, the campus community feels powerless and isolated. The sensational publicity usually attendant on sexual assault incidents compounds the shame and guilt, not only for the victim but also for the campus community. Participating in the consortium allows the college to actively address the problem of sexual assault while protecting its public image.

Another benefit is that members of the consortium coordinating board become consultants to each other. Workable programming ideas can easily be exported to other campuses, either through professional or student consultation.

Active participation in the consortium produces numerous changes on the local campus. Students in training can recruit other students for both training and counseling. Student consultants are available to facilitate other students through

police and health services on campus and in the community. As a result, service providers within the campus community, such as police and health services, have to develop protocols to respond to sexual assault victims.

The existence of a college consortium in a community is a powerful incentive for other colleges to become involved. No one college wants to be left out. As most colleges in a particular area join the consortium on sexual assault, they learn that the model works. The effectiveness of the consortium in addressing one issue fosters cooperation and collaboration between campuses on other issues as well.

For many years colleges, even urban schools, have perpetuated the myth of being ivory towers, removed from the real world. The intrusion of sexual assault by outsiders destroyed that myth; in response, some colleges became more conscious of security. But, now, the recognition of the existence of acquaintance rape on campus has forced a re-conceptualization of the issue. As Pogo says, "We have met the enemy and he is us." Now even the most security-conscious campus cannot hide behind its bunker mentality to protect itself from sexual assault and the real world. Rather than withdraw from the real world, the college has to move out into its community and join with other colleges and community agencies in a collaborative approach to a common problem.

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